

Gallaudet College

Kendall Green
Washington 2, D.C.



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

April 24, 1962

The Hon. John E. Fogarty
House of Representatives
Washington 25, D. C.

My dear Mr. Fogarty:

I have your letter with inclosed letter from Mr. John T. McGee, Jr., who represents parents of profoundly deaf children at the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Conn. This is a good letter and presents a problem that faces all parents of deaf children who may have difficulty in qualifying for college. This is also a worry these days with parents of hearing children. Will their children qualify for college? Will they be accepted at the college of their choice? Where can they go if one college refuses them? With the deaf the problem is aggravated because there is only one college for the deaf (to date).

Mr. McGee is misinformed, however, regarding the degree of deafness of our students. Our Hearing & Speech Center records show that 80 per cent of our students are profoundly deaf. The remaining 20 per cent have varying amounts of residual hearing--they may not be profoundly deaf physically, but they are profoundly deaf educationally or psychologically or sociologically. A 50 per cent decibel loss for one person may not be much of a handicap educationally. For another it is a severe handicap. The attitude of the individual towards his deafness, the age when he became deaf, his educational experiences during school days prior to coming to Gallaudet College, his parents' reactions to his deafness, etc., make the difference. All these factors contribute to the crippling effects of his hearing loss. The audiometric reading is only one basis for our acceptance or rejection of a student.

Very often our Hearing & Speech Center will advise us not to accept a student because of a comparatively small loss of hearing. We so advise the parents and the school from which he graduated. Usually we will then get a letter advising us that this student would never succeed with hearing students because of one reason or another. We always consider these appeals and usually permit that student to enter. Our decision is based on the advice given us by those who have had years of educational experience with the student. The casual observer might criticize us for accepting this student, however.

A word might be said on How deaf must a person be to be profoundly deaf? There is no black and white answer. There is a lot of gray in between. Gallaudet College is for that student whose loss of hearing is so severe--physically, educationally, psychologically, or sociologically--as to make it difficult, if not impossible, for him to attend a college for hearing students with a reasonable hope of average success.

Mr. McGee feels that our courses should be extended or broadened for the profoundly deaf. The implication seems to be that the profoundly deaf are not capable of doing the work required in a liberal arts and science college. Gallaudet College is a liberal arts and science college. We are accredited as such. We maintain, and I think results reveal, that our students can achieve success in the program we offer. Inasmuch as 80 per cent of our students are profoundly deaf, we know that this type of student can succeed.

If it is advisable to establish a college for those who do not qualify for a liberal arts and science program, perhaps it should be initiated on another campus. Actually there is an experimental program along this line in connection with a university at Riverside, California. Students attend the university with a tutor. They take English and mathematics, but the rest of their time is in the vocational field. It is a small beginning. Results should be interesting. The California School for the Deaf at Riverside is behind this venture, and those students who cannot qualify for admission to Gallaudet College are urged to attend these courses. As you know, we have difficulty supplying all the needs in staff and physical facilities for those who do qualify for entrance each fall. Admitting those who do not qualify and setting up a program geared to their particular needs, would be more than we could handle. Furthermore, it is questionable whether the learning climate would be stimulating if we had an academic course of study for part of the enrollment and a vocational program for another part, all on the same campus. This could be an invitation for some to let down on their academic efforts, feeling that if they failed in one they could step over into the vocational set-up. Deaf students have all the enthusiasm and energy of hearing students. They are just as human as hearing students and will react to study and strict requirements just as hearing students do.

We need all the support we can get on this campus to encourage each student to achieve a liberal education. Congress has been generous. Support might be possible for an expanded program, but I feel that our first duty is to improve what we have.

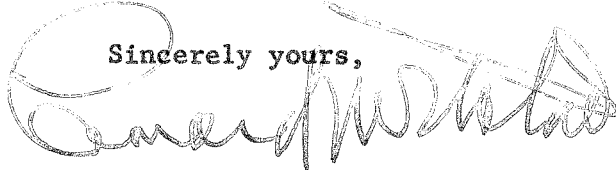
I hope Mr. McGee can come to Washington sometime to discuss these matters. Perhaps a carload of the parents representing the Association of Parents, Teachers, and Counsellors at the American School for the Deaf

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could come to our campus for a day or two. Three years ago two bus loads of teachers came down from New York. The College will be glad to entertain this group as guests while they are in the city. There is no better way to learn than to see and to share ideas. The College is interested. We want to be of help.

We appreciate your splendid interest in these matters. Let us know what more we can do.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Leonard M. Elstad", written over a horizontal line.

Leonard M. Elstad
President